

Michael Gunkle Spring Mill
East side of Moore Road, at junction with
State Route 401 (Conestoga Road),
approximately 1.5 miles east of Bacton
Bacton Vicinity (East Whiteland Township)
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1113

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PA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. PA-1113

MICHAEL GUNKLE SPRING MILL

Location: East side of Moore Road, at junction with State Route 401 (Conestoga Road), approximately 1.5 miles east of Bacton, Bacton Vicinity (East Whiteland Township), Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Mrs. W.S. Yerger, Sr., Malvern R.D., Pennsylvania.

Statement of Significance: This 1793 stone spring mill, one of several built by Michael Gunkle in Chester County, has been little changed; it was in operation for over a century, and is typical of mills built in Chester County in the late 18th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Built by Michael Gunkle 1793, left to son John 1816. Sold by his executor in 1863 to Jonathan Miller, who left it to his daughter Julia H. van Reed in 1868 will. She sold 1870 to Samuel Fethers. In 1897 sheriff sold it to Joseph B. Townsend, whose estate sold it 1913 to Harry J. Reilly, who same year sold it to William Wallace Atterbury, whose estate sold it 1937 to Wilson S. Yerger.
2. Date of erection: Date stone on front wall reads, "Spring Mill Michael & Chatharina Gunkle July 20th 1793."
3. Architect, builder, suppliers: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction: Original plans not located. It is a typical mill, two-and-a-half stories in front, three-and-a-half in back.
5. Alterations and additions: Interior remodeled 1863 by Jonathan Miller; exterior appears unchanged, however.
6. Important old views and references:
 - a. Views: None located.
 - b. References: Sources of information, all to be found in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania. Classified printed and manuscript file under heading East Whiteland Township-Business Houses-Spring Mill.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Michael Gunkle came to Chester County from Philadelphia. He became a very large landowner and built several mills, leaving one or more to each of his three sons. Being in the Great Valley and having excellent transportation both by the Lancaster Turnpike and the Philadelphia and Lancaster Railroad as well as others, the mills were very prosperous and ran for over a century.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

None Known.

D. Supplemental Material:

1. "Valuable Real Estate, FARM, MILL AND WOOD LOTS AT PUBLIC SALE. PURSUANT to the last will and testament of John Gunkle, late of East Whiteland township, deceased, the subscriber will sell at Public Sale, on the premises, on Friday, the 28th day of NOVEMBER next, at 12 o'clock, (noon,) the following described Real Estate, to wit:

"Lot No. 2. - Being a Farm, situate on the northwest side of the State Road, in the township of East Whiteland, in the county of Chester, containing ONE HUNDRED AND TEN ACRES and ninety-three Perches, more or less, about 69 acres of which is arable land and the balance, 41 acres, Woodland of a fair quality. The improvements are a good STONE HOUSE Stone Barn, Wagon House, and stone Spring House over a never failing spring of cold water, well adapted for dairy purposes, a good orchard being on said premises.

"Lot No. 3- Being a Stone Messuage, two Tenements, Blacksmith's Shop, STONE GRIST AND MERCHANT MILL, and Twenty-two acres and forty five perches of land, situate in the township of East Whiteland aforesaid. The Mill is a large durable one, built of stone, having therein two sets of French Burr Stones, is propelled by the Valley Creek, a never-failing stream, and on the same premises is a stone Livery Stable. This Mill is old and established as a merchant mill, is located in the heart of Chester Valley, within 3/4 of a mile of the Valley Railroad station at White Horse, within 23 miles of Philadelphia, and 7 of West Chester, on a good and easy road leading thereto. It has a reasonable share of the country custom of the neighborhood.

"ALSO, 11 WOOD LOTS, adjoining the above, situate in the township of Charlestown, in the county aforesaid, containing together 79 acres, and averaging about 5 acres in each. The timber on these lots is young and thrifty, is composed chiefly of Hickory, Black Oak, White Oak, and Chestnut, and being in the vicinity of railroads and lime Kilns a ready market can always be had for it. Persons wishing to view the above premises previous to the day of sale will call on Mrs. Catherine M. Thomas, residing on the Mansion Farm, adjoining lot No. 3.

David Meconkey,
Executor of John Gunkle, dec'd."

["Chester County Times," West Chester, Pa., November 22, 1862.]

2. "SPRING MILLS.- Samuel Feters, of Spring Mills, East Whiteland, finished a house on the 28th of March, 29 by 30 feet and two stories high, which was commenced on the 10th Feb. last, and the tenants (wheelright and blacksmith) moved into it on the 1st inst. Mr. F. carries on the milling business quite lively buying all the grain that offers at about from five to six cents per bushel less for wheat than Phila. prices, and when he cannot get enough in the neighborhood imports it from the West. He also keeps on hand large quantities of bran, wheat screenings &c., so that those wishing to purchase or sell can always be sure of getting accommodated and waited upon by two or three as gentlemanly young men as live in the township. We noticed that the date stone in the front of this mill bears date as follows: Michael & Catharine Gunkle, 1793, but it was remodelled in 1863 by Jonathan Miller, the then owner, and has quite a genteel look outside as well as a good appearance inside, with all the modern improvements in machinery for making flour &c. It contains but four cog-wheels and runs so smoothly that strangers can scarcely tell when it is running. It is certainly a model mill and its proprietor is a model business man."

["Jeffersonian," West Chester, Pa., April 6, 1872.]

3. "A Large Business. - Of the county grist mills throughout Chester county, there is probably no one that surpasses in business, the one owned and worked by Mr. Samuel Feters, known as Spring Mills, in East Whiteland Township. The monthly quantities of grain, Flour, etc., supplied to customers from this mill, are as follows: Corn, 50 tons; Flour, 200 barrels; Oats, 1000 bushels; mill feed, from 50 to 60 tons. The mill is required to run 18 hours out of every 24, Sundays excepted, in order to meet the demands of his patrons, and even with this effort on the part of its go-ahead proprietor, he sometimes falls short. During the past year he has hauled from his mill with one pair of little mules, over 18000 tons of flour, feed etc., and his business has now so increased that he has found it necessary to double his means of transportation, and to this end he one day last week, purchased another pair of mules."

["Jeffersonian," West Chester, Pa., September 21, 1872.]

4. "Spring Mill is now running again after a four weeks stop for repairs, which consist of a new twenty foot, overshot water wheel, a new forebay, and one hundred and thirty feet of 24 inch steel pipe from the head race to forebay. It was an expensive job but seems to be substantial, and farmers and others can now get a barrel of choice flour for five bushels of wheat, or buy a barrel of flour for the price of five bushels of wheat at any time."

["Chester County Democrat," West Chester, Pa., August 23, 1894.]

5. "Carpenters are building an air tight and frost proof house over the twenty-foot water wheel at Spring Mill. The mill has a capacity of about fifty barrels of flour in eighteen hours at present which can be further increased at short notice to one half more. Some new improved flour dressing machinery will be added also more smooth rolls and another purifier all in the near future as the rapidly increasing flour trade demands additional machinery to keep abreast of the times."

["Chester County Democrat," West Chester, Pa., November 8, 1894.]

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This typical stone mill has two-and-one-half stories in front and three-and-one-half stories in back, and has apparently had very few alterations. (Remodeled by Jonathan Miller in 1863 and repaired in 1894).
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 40' (three-bay west front) x 36' (two-bay south side), two-and-a-half stories in front and three-and-a-half stories in back.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Uncoursed masonry with large stone quoins of varied sizes.
4. Chimneys: The original high stone chimney exists on the roof slope at the southwest corner.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The west front door is the original door of four panels. A hood extends over the door. On the north side is the double door used for transporting material in and out of the building.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All the windows seem original and are arranged symmetrically. There are six windows on all sides except the front where there are four. In all cases they are six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash windows with no shutters.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with wooden shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The original box cornice exists; it is a flat-bottomed wooden one that extends on all sides forming pent eaves across the gable ends.
- c. Dormers: A wooden dormer with six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash window is on the east side.

C. Description of Interior:

Not accessible at time of recording.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Attractive setting at cross roads; mill faces west.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: Large spring house nearby; miller's house also, contemporary with mill.
4. Walks, driveways: A dirt driveway goes down by the north side.
5. Landscaping, gardens: None.

Prepared by Bart Anderson
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August 1958